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A YEAR IN THE WRITING WORKSHOP

Linking Writing Instruction Practices and Teachers' Epistemologies and Beliefs about Writing Instruction

ABSTRACT

This article reports the findings from a year-long study of 6 writing teachers in an urban elementary school who also received intensive professional development in writing instruction from a nonprofit organization. Repeated observations demonstrated that the teachers displayed consistency in their use of the core instructional elements associated with writing workshop, which aligned with the emphasis of the professional development support. However, the teachers exhibited substantial variability in their use of student engagement tactics, management techniques, and instructional supports. According to survey data, the teachers demonstrated a strong and relatively stable sense of teaching efficacy and held a fairly balanced view of the importance of explicit and incidental writing instruction, and these beliefs were related to their instructional practices. Interviews with the teachers highlighted the relevance of teachers' own writing behaviors and attitudes.

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NEARLY 25 years ago, a paradigm shift occurred for writing instruction in America's schools. Prior to that time, traditional approaches to teaching writing were characterized by teacher-directed lessons on discrete skills using contrived writing assignments, infrequent requests to compose texts longer than a few paragraphs, and a focus on the attributes (especially the conventions) of a finished product over the processes used to generate texts (e.g., Pollington, Wilcox, & Morrison, 2001; Tidwell & Steele, 1995). The seminal work of

individuals like Atwell (1987), Calkins (1998), and Graves (1983) paved the way for the widespread adoption of process-oriented writing instruction and, in particular, writing workshop in elementary classrooms in the mid-1980s. Writing workshop varies in how it is instantiated, but the key elements include (a) minilessons on workshop procedures, writing skills, composition strategies, and craft elements; (b) sustained time (20–30 minutes) for personally meaningful writing nearly every day to help students become comfortable with the writing process and varied writing tasks; (c) teacher- and student-led conferences about writing plans and written products to help students appropriate habits of mind associated with good writing and to make the most of their writing; and (d) frequent opportunities for sharing with others, sometimes through formal publishing activities, to enhance the authenticity of writing activities and cultivate a sense of community.

Contemporary approaches to writing instruction that emphasize the writing process such as writing workshop generally appear to be associated with better writing quality than traditional approaches that focus on mimesis and rules for conventions (e.g., Graham & Perin, 2007; Honeycutt & Pritchard, 2005; Monteith, 1991; Scannella, 1982; Varble, 1990), though a process-oriented approach does not necessarily yield a more positive motivational stance toward writing (Honeycutt & Pritchard, 2005; Monteith, 1991; Pollington et al., 2001; Scannella, 1982; Troia, Lin, Monroe, & Cohen, 2009). The number and quality of studies that have examined the efficacy of process writing are, however, limited (Graham & Perin, 2007).

Variability in the Application of Writing Workshop

Educators today typically employ some form of process writing instruction such as writing workshop in their classrooms (e.g., Patthey-Chavez, Matsumura, & Valdes, 2004; Wray, Medwell, Fox, & Poulson, 2000). According to data collected through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), nearly 7 out of 10 teachers reported using process-oriented instruction to teach written composition. Yet, no more than a third of those same teachers said they spend 90 minutes or more per week teaching writing. Additionally, many of the teachers surveyed reported that they infrequently ask their students to produce multiple drafts or revise and edit their work (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999). Clare, Valdes, and Patthey-Chavez (2000) found that nearly 60% of teachers' comments on narrative and expository papers written by students in third- and seventh-grade classes where process instruction was used were directed at microstructural concerns about correct usage of writing conventions rather than macrostructural elements such as content, organization, and style. A focus on conventions rather than content or process in teachers' feedback may be even more prevalent for poor writers (e.g., Applebee, Langer, Jenkins, Mullis, & Foertsch, 1990; DeGroff, 1992). Thus, there is some question about just how teachers define and enact process writing instruction in their classrooms.

Recent evidence suggests that teachers display quite a bit of variability in how they enact process-oriented instruction, and this variability is influenced by their epistemologies and beliefs, experiences as teachers and writers, and teaching context (Graham, Harris, Fink, & MacArthur, 2001; Graham, Harris, MacArthur, & Fink, 2002; Lipson, Mosenthal, Daniels, & Woodside-Jiron, 2000; Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Hoy, 1998). For example, Lipson et al. (2000) observed that 11 fifth-grade teachers who reported using process writing instruction

differed in how much control they exerted over students' writing, their treatment of the writing process as a flexible tool versus an object of study, and how central peer- and teacher-led conferences were to explicit writing instruction. Moreover, these differences in teaching practices were linked to one of four different theoretical orientations regarding instruction: minimalist (little explicit instruction and typically few opportunities for sustained writing), curriculum oriented (teacher-controlled instruction, focus on procedures and skills), inquiry oriented (child-centered instruction, focus on flexibility, authenticity, and interactive experiences), or polytheoretic. Cutler and Graham (2008) found that about three-quarters of a national sample of primary grade educators reported using a combination of process-oriented instruction and skill-based instruction (similar to Lipson et al.'s polytheoretic orientation), while the rest used one or the other, and that 65% of these teachers reported that they did not use a commercial program to teach writing (which potentially could help standardize writing instruction). They also found that teachers varied considerably in their reported use of specific instructional practices (e.g., teaching strategies vs. skills, exposing students to varied genres, using technology, assigning writing homework) and in how much instructional time they allotted for composing texts of a paragraph or longer in length.

Instructional variability, which is likely due to a number of factors, may help explain the lackluster performance of America's youth on the NAEP writing assessment, no more than a third of whom perform at or above a proficient level of writing performance (Persky, Daane, & Jin, 2003; Salahu-Din, Persky, & Miller, 2008). Furthermore, the writing performance of students from low-income minority households has remained substantially inferior to that of middle-class Caucasian students, and this achievement gap might be attributable to a dearth of writing instruction in impoverished schools. In an observational study of third- and fourth-grade classrooms in high-poverty schools, Foorman and her colleagues (Foorman & Schatschneider, 2003; Moats, Foorman, & Taylor, 2006) found that teachers spent only about 10% of the time devoted to literacy instruction teaching composition or spelling.

Not only the amount of allocated instructional time but also the pedagogical practices educators use during that time affect students' subject area achievement (e.g., McCutchen et al., 2002), though such process-product research in writing is quite scant. Nevertheless, it is likely that variability in writing instruction practices impacts students' writing performance for better or worse. For instance, we have found that less experienced teachers of writing who did not demonstrate a strong core of instructional strategies may have limited their students' progress in writing as compared with progress attained by students whose teachers possessed a broad array of teaching tactics (Troia et al., 2009). Specifically, teachers whose students made the smallest gains in writing performance engaged in less diverse communicative transactions with their students and made the fewest adaptations for struggling writers. Furthermore, a majority of these less effective teachers employed more punitive consequences and provided fewer opportunities for students to collaborate on writing projects and manage their own or others' writing behaviors. Likewise, Singer and Scollay (2007) found that teachers promoted significantly greater gains in students' writing achievement when they (*a*) focused more on varied genres and less on worksheets and grammar, (*b*) adopted a more flexible and nonlinear interpretation of the writing process, (*c*) permitted more student choice in topic selection and timing of writing activities, and (*d*) used model texts extensively. Many forces exert an influ-

ence over teachers' instructional decision making and strategies and thus create variance between teachers, but two personal characteristics—theoretical orientation and self-efficacy for teaching—stand out and are the focus of the study we report here.

The Influence of Teacher Epistemologies and Beliefs

Educators' assumptions about how students learn and what are the best ways to teach seem to affect the instructional materials they select and the procedures they implement (Cunningham & Fitzgerald, 1996; Fitzgerald, 1993, 1999). In the domain of literacy, observations confirm that what teachers elect to teach and how they go about teaching it are shaped largely by their theoretical orientations (Graham et al., 2002; Lipson et al., 2000; Sosniak & Stodolsky, 1993). Similarly, educators' self-efficacy beliefs appear to influence their teaching. When teachers believe they can execute courses of action to teach well, they frequently exhibit desirable teaching behaviors that yield positive effects on their students' motivation to learn (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Midgley, Feldlaufer, & Eccles, 1989) and their students' academic achievement (e.g., Ashton & Webb, 1986; Graham et al., 2001). Specifically, teachers with strong teaching self-efficacy tend to (a) be more likely to adopt innovative teaching practices (Guskey, 1988), (b) use more student-centered learning activities and proactive management techniques (Rose & Medway, 1981), (c) provide more support and feedback and generally persist more when students struggle (Bender & Ukeje, 1989; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Massengill-Shaw, Dvorak, & Bates, 2007; Ross, 1994); and (d) refer students for support services less often (Soodak & Podell, 1993). However, self-efficacy beliefs are context-bound (Bandura, 1997), while theoretical orientations are probably more stable across subject areas. The complexity of teachers' beliefs and actions reported in the literature likely reflects the confluence of (a) their knowledge of child development, writing skills acquisition, and diverse pedagogical strategies; (b) their values associated with literacy shaped by personal experiences and influential others; and (c) contextual variables, including students' abilities (Guskey, 1988) and available school resources (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Unfortunately, research that has focused on teachers' theoretical orientations and teaching self-efficacy for writing instruction is quite limited.

Other Contributors to Effective Writing Instruction

We interpret the extant literature on writing instruction practices as having taken a narrow view of instruction, largely focusing on the enactment of writing workshop elements and excluding the broader array of critical elements of effective instruction, such as classroom management (e.g., Stage & Quiroz, 1997; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993), student engagement (e.g., Dev, 1997; Strong, Silver, & Robinson, 1995), and differentiated instructional procedures and tactics to address unique learning needs and situations (e.g., Bender, 2002; Tomlinson et al., 2003). Classroom management in particular is an important aspect of teaching, because effective management practices are associated with greater student academic performance, fewer disciplinary problems, and better social interactions with peers and adults (Gresham, 2002; Sugai & Horner, 2006). Conversely, the use of less effective classroom management practices, such as punitive actions, is associated with a greater incidence of

undesirable behaviors (e.g., Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Teacher beliefs have been found to influence their attitudes toward students and their decisions regarding how to manage misbehavior: teachers who attribute problem behaviors to factors outside of their control (i.e., those who possess low personal teaching efficacy) tend to take less responsibility for such behaviors and engage in fewer positive management tactics (Georgiou, Christou, Stavriniades, & Panaoura, 2002; Poulou & Norwich, 2000; Rose & Medway, 1981). Given that writing workshop instruction places heavy emphasis on routines, collaboration, cooperation, and sharing, and that the writing process demands a high degree of self-control, it is likely that teachers who employ effective classroom management tactics are more successful in teaching writing using this instructional approach.

Study Purposes and Research Questions

We took a novel approach in this study by examining writing instruction in the context of schoolwide reform efforts, including intensive professional development, designed to enhance the quantity and quality of writing instruction for students in urban schools, which would be expected to attenuate between-teacher variance in the application of writing workshop elements. This permitted a more intensive examination of variability in additional instructional elements and how this might be associated with teachers' beliefs and knowledge. Our study was part of a larger investigation that examined school, teacher, and student characteristics that influence teachers' capacity for adopting innovative writing instruction practices, and how the interplay of these characteristics and practices affects student performance (see Troia et al., 2009, for an examination of the efficacy of writing workshop with high- and low-performing writers).

We addressed three main research questions in this study. First, what specific teaching practices in the areas of writing workshop curriculum implementation, adaptive instructional supports, classroom management, and student engagement do teachers employ, and do teachers exhibit variability along these dimensions? Second, what is the nature of teachers' knowledge and beliefs regarding writing instruction, and do personal epistemologies and beliefs change over the course of a school year in the context of high-quality professional development? Third, do teachers' knowledge and beliefs influence their teaching practices, especially with regard to the naturally occurring variability among young writers in a given classroom? For this last question, we were particularly interested in what specific aspects of teachers' epistemologies and beliefs were linked with what particular aspects of teaching writing.

Method

We conducted our investigation during the 2002–2003 school year in an urban school, Cascadia Elementary (a pseudonym), located in the Seattle metropolitan area. Cascadia Elementary in many ways portrays a typical urban school (see Table 1). Three-quarters of the students receive free or reduced-price meals, and thus the school qualifies for Title I funding. The student population is racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse—only about 7% are Caucasian and almost 20% are classified as English language learners. Yet, this school appears to be “bucking the odds,” because

Table 1. Cascadia Elementary School Demographics and WASL Performance Data

Student Characteristic	Percent Enrollment (<i>N</i> = 418)	Fourth Graders Tested (<i>N</i>)	Met/Exceeded WASL-R Standards (%)	Met/Exceeded WASL-W Standards (%)	Met/Exceeded WASL-M Standards (%)
Gender:					
Male	54.8	33	54.5	51.5	45.5
Female	45.2	33	60.6	63.6	45.5
Race/ethnicity:					
Black	46.2	25	64	60	40
Asian	31.6	24	58.3	62.5	54.2
Hispanic	13.4	12	50	41.7	33.3
White	7.2	4	N/A	N/A	N/A
Native American	1.7	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
All students		66	56.7	56.7	44.8
Free/reduced-price meals	74.8		57.6	57.6	45.5
Title I reading	...		56.3	59.4	45.3
ESL	18.5		21.4	35.7	14.3
Special education	11.1	

Note.—All enrolled fourth graders were tested in all three domains. WASL performance data for White and Native American students were not available from the state because fewer than 10 students in each category were tested.

nearly 6 out of every 10 students in the fourth grade, even those from low-income families, met or exceeded standards on the Washington Assessment of Student Learning (see Table 1), the state's key accountability measure, in reading (WASL-R) and writing (WASL-W) the year in which we completed our research. Moreover, data from six consecutive years between 1997 and 2003 indicate a positive trend on the WASL-W but slightly negative trends on the WASL-R and WASL-M (math). Thus, writing instruction at this school appears to be relatively successful.

The year before our investigation, staff at Cascadia had agreed that a focus on high-quality literacy teaching and learning was a priority. This focus was meaningfully aligned with prior professional development activities at the school, including those provided by a local nonprofit agency. As a result, all staff participated in sustained literacy instruction training aimed at increasing their use of evidence-based strategies for reading and writing, including word study, varied approaches to reading instruction (sustained silent reading, guided reading, teacher read-aloud, partner reading), writing-to-learn activities, student self-assessment, and leveled books to accommodate diverse reading abilities in the classroom.

Writing Workshop Instruction at Cascadia Elementary

The six teachers who volunteered to be in our study were diverse along a number of dimensions, including grade level taught, experience, and highest degree (see Table 2). They and all the other first- through fifth-grade teachers at Cascadia Elementary participated in a comprehensive schoolwide program for supporting their use of writing workshop. The program, developed and managed by a community nonprofit agency serving several low-income schools in the area, included the six core components listed in Table 3. A small group of teachers, including three in our research project, had worked with staff developers from the nonprofit agency previously.

Table 2. Participating Teacher and Classroom Characteristics

Teacher	Race/ Ethnicity	Years Teaching Experience	Years Nonprofit Experience	Highest Degree (Discipline)	Grades Taught	Number of Students	IEP Students
Taylor	White	28	5	Master's (Education)	2/3	24	3
Valerie	White	23	5	Master's (Early Childhood Education)	2/3	23	0
Pamela	White	1	0	Master's (Education)	3	22	3
Betty	Hispanic	7	1	Bachelor's (Bilingual Education)	3	23	1
Janet	Asian	12	0	Bachelor's (Human Development)	4	20	2
Kerri	White	10	0	Doctorate (Education)	5	22	0

Much of the instructional content of the professional development program was derived from the work of Atwell (1987), Calkins (1998), Fletcher and Portalupi (1998, 2001), and Graves (1983). The teachers devoted 45 minutes per day, 4–5 days per week, to writing workshop instruction. The writing curriculum was rooted in genre study (e.g., Chapman, 1999), with each genre cycle lasting about 9 weeks. Teachers covered four different genres—personal narrative, expository, poetry, and fictional narrative (one teacher substituted persuasive writing for fiction)—during the academic year.

Within each genre cycle, several phases of instruction were employed. First, students experienced immersion, in which they were introduced to the structural elements of the genre, read and listened to touchstone texts that exemplified these elements, and generated “seed” ideas for their papers (e.g., favorite memories, area of expertise). Next, they engaged in planning, in which they selected one of their ideas for further development, collected additional information (e.g., discussed their idea with a partner to gauge potential audience interest, researched facts about their topic using primary and secondary sources), learned how to incorporate unique text features (e.g., dialogue, key vocabulary, captions), and organized all the information they had gathered (e.g., completed a timeline or planning sheet). Then, students drafted their compositions, receiving substantial teacher and peer support through conferences. In these conferences, students shared their work, discussed how they were using what had been taught, and received extensive feedback. Following drafting, students revised their papers, reading and sharing their texts multiple times. During this phase of instruction, the bulk of assistance was provided through conferencing, though minilessons were devised to help students improve their writing through adding supporting details, zooming in on pivotal moments, and deleting

Table 3. Core Components of Professional Development Model at Cascadia Elementary

- Ongoing professional development opportunities through bimonthly workshops and weekly individual coaching sessions to assist teachers with implementing daily writing instruction
- Weekly classroom demonstrations to support the orchestrated use of exemplary children's literature, the writing process, and instructed composing knowledge, skills, and strategies
- Weekly curriculum planning meetings and debriefings in grade-level teams
- Trained volunteers to help students plan, draft, revise, and publish their work, primarily in the context of individual and small-group conferences
- Placement of resident authors who shared craft lessons and their love of writing with students and teachers
- Publishing opportunities, including book-binding support and public readings

trivial information. Then, students edited their work with an editing checklist, both independently and with a peer. Finally, they published their work.

Research Design

We elected to use a mixed multimethods design because (a) the collection of qualitative and quantitative data in combination serves to complement and validate data derived from only one method and (b) we were interested in linking teacher-related constructs that are best measured through rating scales with teachers' observed writing instruction practices. Our qualitative data sources included multiple classroom observations and teacher interviews. Specifically, we collected observation data regarding the different types of workshop management tactics, student engagement tactics, instructional tactics, and curriculum elements each teacher employed throughout the year. We interviewed teachers several times to gather background information, general impressions of their knowledge, beliefs, and practices related to writing instruction and assessment, and explanations for observed events and actions. Our quantitative data sources included rating scales to assess teachers' theoretical orientations, self-efficacy beliefs, and self-reported instructional practices at the beginning and end of the school year, during which teachers were receiving ongoing professional development in writing workshop. These data permitted us to employ a pre-post case-study approach in tandem with grounded theory to induce a theoretical model of how teachers' epistemologies and beliefs are connected to their instructional practices.

Procedures and Data Sources

Observations. We observed the six participating teachers in writing workshop between four and nine times during the school year. All six teachers taught an additional 90-minute literacy block at a time separate from when writing workshop occurred, so we also observed one reading lesson taught by each teacher (Taylor and Valerie planned much of their literacy instruction together; thus we only observed Taylor for reading instruction). Valerie was observed four times (3 hours total), Taylor five times (3.75 hours total), Pamela six times (4.5 hours total), Kerri seven times (5.25 hours total), Janet eight times (6 hours total), and Betty nine times (6.75 hours). We tended to observe teachers more who seemed to struggle with their writing instruction. Observations consisted of semistructured anecdotal field notes recorded by one of two observers (the second and third authors), who rotated observing in each classroom throughout the year after an initial 1-month calibration period with the first author.

Our observation methods were consistent with grounded theory and the method of constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The observer identified (a) the implicit and/or explicit goals of the lesson and the materials; (b) the teacher's explanations, instructions, and comments; (c) specific classroom and individual student management tactics employed by the teacher; and (d) methods used by the teacher to foster student engagement. The observation notes first were independently coded by all four authors—specific elements in each of the broad categories noted above were recorded for each teacher. Then, we collectively verified that each element was recorded by each author for each teacher; discrepancies were resolved through delib-

eration, and additions, deletions, or substitutions were made as necessary. Next, we applied axial coding to identify and associate broad coding categories and emerging subcategories based on the recorded specific elements through deliberation until saturation was reached. As part of this process, we developed a code book with definitions for each category, subcategory, and element (available from the first author). Finally, we independently reviewed coding decisions based on the original field notes and attained consensus for each decision.

An element was recorded for a teacher whether it occurred once during a single observation or multiple times within a single observation or across observations. Thus, no attempt was made to determine the frequency with which a teacher used a particular instructional element through observation. However, we supplemented observational data with survey data about the teachers' writing instruction for good versus poor writers in an attempt to capture the frequency of particular instructional activities to ensure we did not miss key instructional practices and to validate our observations of teachers' writing instruction.

Interviews. One of the first three authors interviewed each teacher four times during the school year. Our initial interviews were semistructured with guiding questions focused on professional experience; professional development endeavors; philosophy of literacy instruction; instructional curricula; materials, strategies, and assessment methods; adaptations for struggling students; and personal writing habits. Subsequent interviews elicited more information about and rationale for what was observed in each teacher's classroom. The interviews served as a primary data source for the information we compiled for Table 2 and were used to corroborate our descriptions of the school context and writing instruction framework previously described. The first author, who interviewed the school principal, attended all the staff development workshops and some of the demonstration and coaching sessions, and obtained all relevant permanent products that were distributed to teachers via the professional development staff.

Rating scales. We administered three scales (theoretical orientations, teaching efficacy, and instructional practices) to the six teachers in October and May. Teachers' beliefs about the roles of explicit instruction, incidental and informal teaching methods, and expectations for correctness were evaluated with the Teacher Writing Orientation Scale (TWOS; Graham et al., 2002), a 13-item instrument¹ that uses a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). On this scale, higher scores represented stronger emphasis placed on the importance of the construct measured by a factor.

Teachers' sense of efficacy in writing instruction was measured with the Teacher Efficacy Scale for Writing (TESW; Graham et al., 2001), a 16-item instrument² that uses a scale identical to that described above to assess two aspects of efficacy: (a) personal teaching efficacy or teachers' beliefs about their ability to teach writing and effect change in their students, and (b) general teaching efficacy or teachers' beliefs about limitations on their teaching effectiveness created by circumstances such as an unsupportive home environment. The negatively stated items on the general teaching efficacy portion of the scale were recoded so that higher scores for both factors would represent a more positive sense of teaching efficacy.

A modified version of a questionnaire used in a study conducted by Graham, Harris, Fink-Chorzempa, and MacArthur (2003) to identify the instructional adaptations for struggling writers made by a national sample of primary grade teachers

was used here to obtain information regarding how frequently specific writing activities and instructional procedures were reportedly used by the teachers with their good and poor writers. We refer to this modified instrument as the Teacher Writing Practices Scale (TWPS). Five of the items asked teachers to indicate how often they taught basic writing skills (i.e., handwriting, spelling words, phonics for spelling, capitalization and punctuation, and grammar), whereas four items asked them to specify how frequently they taught composing strategies (i.e., planning, revising, and text organization). Seven additional items asked teachers to specify how often typical components of a writing workshop were used (i.e., conferencing with students, permitting students to select their own writing topics, providing minilessons, overtly modeling writing strategies, encouraging students to help their peers with writing, having students share their writing with classmates, and permitting students to complete assignments at their own pace). Three other items asked teachers to identify how frequently they retaught strategies or skills, how often students wrote on a computer, and how often students were encouraged to use invented spellings. The instrument uses a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from never (1) to always/daily (7).

Results

Overview of Findings

The observations we conducted throughout the school year in each classroom indicated that each teacher generally adhered to the writing workshop model, which was anticipated given the level of support provided by the professional development staff (see Table 4). Specifically, the teachers displayed use of between 70% and 89% of 27 critical workshop elements we identified. The one subcategory of curriculum in which teachers demonstrated notable variability among themselves was vocabulary, indicating that not all of them helped their students appropriate the terminology associated with writing processes and products (except for writing quality traits). The teachers differed much more, however, with respect to the specific management procedures (e.g., external reinforcement, physical arrangements), student engagement tactics (e.g., checking in, degree of autonomy), and adaptive instructional supports (e.g., materials, communicative transactions) they used.

With respect to workshop management procedures, Janet displayed use of half of the varied types of positive management tactics (i.e., excluding punitive consequences) we observed, closely followed by Pamela and Valerie (47% each). However, Janet as well as Taylor also used a number of punitive consequences to manage student behavior in the writing workshop. Five of the six teachers used the nonverbal means of proximity control and clapping and the verbal means of praise and requests for compliance to ensure students were meeting acceptable standards for classroom behavior. Five of the teachers organized their classrooms into desk pods to facilitate sharing and cooperation as well as to more effectively monitor student activity. Half the teachers used external reinforcement or procedures to capitalize on self- or peer management.

Taylor and Betty used the least number of different types of engagement tactics (38% and 50%, respectively), whereas Valerie and Janet used the most (69% and 88%, respectively). Of the different types of engagement tactics we coded, there was consistency across teachers in their use of methods for permitting students to share their

Table 4. Observation Coding Data

Category	Total Possible Elements	Taylor	Valerie	Pamela	Betty	Janet	Kerri
Workshop management tactics:							
Nonverbal	11	3	4	7	3	6	3
Verbal	9	4	4	5	5	6	3
Physical arrangements	3	2	2	2	2	2	1
External reinforcers	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Self/peer management	6	2	3	0	0	1	4
Punitive consequences	6	5	0	2	0	4	0
Student engagement tactics:							
Autonomy	4	2	2	2	1	4	3
Sharing	5	3	4	3	3	5	3
Checking	7	1	5	5	4	5	3
Instructional tactics:							
Modeling	9	7	7	5	5	4	5
Personnel supports	5	5	5	5	3	4	5
Material supports	21	9	12	10	11	9	9
Transactional supports	11	5	7	5	5	4	3
Curriculum:							
Workshop elements	5	5	5	5	4	4	5
Genres	5	4	4	4	4	4	4
Process features	5	5	4	5	5	5	5
Product features	3	3	2	3	3	3	3
Vocabulary	6	2	3	4	3	2	3
Collaboration	3	3	3	3	2	1	3

Note.—The complete table of coding data for each element for each teacher is available from the first author.

writing. Additionally, all of the teachers roamed the classroom and/or asked questions to check that students were working productively. Five teachers allowed students to set their own pace for finishing major works of authorship, but otherwise there was inconsistent use of methods to promote student autonomy.

Finally, Valerie demonstrated the most variety in her instructional tactics, using two-thirds of the elements we recorded for all teachers across the academic year, whereas Janet and Kristen demonstrated the least variety, using 46% and 48% of the elements, respectively. There was strong consistency across teachers regarding their use of additional personnel to support instruction, which is to be expected because the nonprofit agency provided training for the classroom volunteers and helped coordinate the placement of guest writers at the school. All of our teachers used some of the same materials to support writing instruction: individual writing notebooks, class and individual student planning charts, visual displays of the steps of the writing process, and posted writing performance standards. The teachers also were similar with respect to modeling writing processes and products using teacher and student writing samples and modeling how to use material supports like writing notebooks, graphic organizers, checklists, and rubrics. All of the teachers asked questions and/or made suggestions as ways to increase students' writing knowledge, skills, and strategies.

On the TWOS, our group of elementary teachers held a balanced, polytheoretic orientation toward writing instruction at the beginning of the year, positively endorsing both explicit instruction (mean of 5.5 on a 6-point scale) and naturalistic/incidental teaching methods (mean of 4.8), while downplaying the importance of

correctness in students' writing (mean of 2.4). Additionally, they did not display notable changes in their theoretical orientation over the course of the school year, except for slightly higher expectations for correctness at the end of the school year (see Table 5). The obtained means are similar to those reported by Graham et al. (2002) for their nationwide sample of primary grade teachers and exemplify the balanced view of literacy instruction among exemplary elementary school teachers described by Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, and Hampston (1998).

On the TESW, teachers reported a strong sense of personal teaching efficacy (mean of 4.7 on a 6-point scale) and general teaching efficacy (mean of 4.4), which did not change much from October to May (see Table 5). Thus, our teachers perceived themselves to be competent in the use of effective writing instruction practices and somewhat confident in their ability to overcome potential learning obstacles. However, Kerri and Janet displayed slight increases in their general teaching efficacy from the beginning to end of the school year, whereas the rest of the teachers showed decreases in this aspect of teaching efficacy of one-third of a point to one and one-third points.

Both individual teacher and aggregated results from the TWPS are presented in Table 6. The teachers, as a group, generally reported modest adjustments to how often they taught writing skills or composing strategies, and in how frequently they employed writing workshop elements with good and poor writers in their classrooms. Moreover, they reported minimal differentiation in how much they encouraged invented spelling, used a computer to support writing, or retaught information based on student writing ability. These findings align with those reported by Graham et al. (2003): nearly 20% of their sample reported making no adaptations for poor writers while another quarter of the sample reported making only one or two adaptations. As might be expected, teachers of older students in our study reported less frequently encouraging invented spelling and more frequently using computers. One teacher, Janet, stood out in terms of reporting low levels of skill and strategy instruction and reteaching skills and strategies. As shown in Table 6, three aspects of self-reported instruction showed change over the course of the school year among our group of teachers; there were drops in the reported frequency of skills instruction (from 5.2 to 4.7 on a 7-point scale), reteaching efforts (from 5.0 to 4.0), and incorporation of workshop elements (from 5.6 to 5.4) for students in general.

Case Summaries

Taylor. Taylor is an experienced teacher, both in terms of classroom instruction and his involvement with writing instruction professional development. Like all of the teachers we worked with in this study, Taylor endorsed a polytheoretic view of writing instruction, with a strong belief in the importance of explicit instruction (pretest-posttest average of 5.1 on the TWOS) and an almost equally strong belief that incidental teaching is important (average of 4.6). Though he generally downplayed the role of correctness in students' writing (average of 2.3), he appeared to come to view this as more important as the school year progressed. This trend was noted among the rest of our sample of teachers. Taylor's overall limited expectations for correctness as well as his strong beliefs in explicit instruction are evident in the following quote from an interview: "Literacy is something to be celebrated. It's a process. The child works on something, and it isn't perfect. You have to realize that

Table 5. Means (and Standard Deviations) for Teacher Writing Orientation Scale and Teacher Efficacy for Writing Scale

Teacher	Teacher Writing Orientation Scale Factors						Teacher Efficacy for Writing Scale Factors			
	Explicit Instruction		Natural Approach		Correctness		Personal Efficacy		General Efficacy	
	October	May	October	May	October	May	October	May	October	May
Taylor	4.75 (1.26)	5.50 (.58)	4.75 (1.89)	4.50 (1.73)	1.80 (.84)	2.80 (1.64)	4.40 (1.07)	4.80 (1.14)	4.17 (1.47)	3.50 (1.76)
Valerie	5.75 (.50)	5.75 (.50)	4.50 (.58)	4.50 (1.73)	2.80 (.84)	3.00 (1.58)	4.80 (.79)	4.90 (1.10)	4.83 (1.47)	3.50 (1.76)
Pamela	5.25 (.96)	4.75 (.96)	5.25 (.96)	5.25 (.96)	2.60 (2.30)	2.60 (2.30)	5.20 (.79)	5.10 (.88)	5.17 (1.17)	4.50 (1.52)
Betty	6.00 (.00)	6.00 (.00)	4.00 (1.41)	4.75 (1.26)	3.00 (1.00)	3.20 (1.48)	5.10 (.57)	4.70 (.48)	3.67 (1.03)	3.33 (1.03)
Janet	5.25 (.50)	5.50 (.58)	4.50 (1.29)	4.50 (1.73)	1.80 (1.79)	2.00 (1.73)	3.90 (1.29)	4.00 (1.15)	4.83 (1.47)	5.00 (.63)
Kerri	6.00 (.00)	6.00 (.00)	5.75 (.50)	3.00 (2.16)	2.60 (2.07)	3.20 (1.79)	4.90 (.88)	4.50 (1.65)	3.83 (1.94)	4.33 (1.97)
All	5.50 (.78)	5.58 (.65)	4.79 (1.22)	4.42 (1.61)	2.43 (1.52)	2.80 (1.67)	4.72 (.99)	4.67 (1.13)	4.42 (1.46)	4.03 (1.54)

Table 6. Means for Teacher Writing Practices Scale

Instructional Activity	Taylor	Valerie	Pamela	Betty	Janet	Kerri	Average
Teaching skills:							
October	6.4	6.07	5.07	5.6	3.6	4.4	5.19
May	5.13	5.13	4	6.2	3.2	4.27	4.66
Good writers ^a	5.7	5	4.5	5.9	3.4	4.2	4.79
Poor writers ^a	5.9	6	4.6	5.9	3.4	4.5	5.1
Teaching composing strategies:							
October	6.11	4.67	5.33	3.67	3.67	5	4.74
May	5.33	5.33	5	5	4.33	4.78	4.96
Good writers	5.67	5	5.17	4.34	4	4.67	4.81
Poor writers	5.83	5	5.17	4.34	4	5	4.86
Using writing workshop components:							
October	6.09	5.95	6.24	4.81	4.86	5.57	5.59
May	5.9	5.9	5.48	4.38	5.29	5.29	5.37
Good writers	5.93	5.79	5.79	4.5	5.08	5.34	5.41
Poor writers	6.14	6.14	5.93	4.72	5.08	5.5	5.58
Encouraging invented spelling:							
October	7	7	7	5	4	1	5.17
May	7	7	7	5	5	1	5.33
Good writers	7	7	7	4.5	4.5	1	5.17
Poor writers	7	7	7	5.5	4.5	1	5.33
Using computers for writing:							
October	1	2	2.33	1	4	5	2.56
May	2	2	2	1	2	6	2.5
Good writers	1.5	2	1.5	1	3	5.5	2.42
Poor writers	1.5	2	3.5	1	3	5.5	2.75
Reteaching skills or strategies:							
October	6	4	6	4	3	7	5
May	4	4	4	4	3	5	4
Good writers	5	4	5	4	3	5.5	4.42
Poor writers	5	4	5	4	3	6.5	4.59

^a The means reported for good and poor writers are averaged across the school year.

at this time in their life, this is what they can do, and so we celebrate that. . . . Aspects of good writing are intentionally taught. Literature is used to support writing. That writing is a response to what is going on in the kids' lives and in the classroom." His downplay of correctness in the mechanics of writing also can be seen in the observation data; we never witnessed him use revising or editing checklists or classroom postings of writing rules and traits, material supports that would be expected to reinforce correct usage. Additionally, he reported encouraging the application of invented spelling daily throughout the year, which does not reflect an expectation for correct use of writing conventions.

Taylor reported that he spent a good deal of time having struggling writers dictate to him, which he presumed allowed them to feel more confident. He also said he provided them with more individualized instruction by allocating more time for conferencing with these students. We verified these claims through our observations. Taylor mentioned several times during interviews and debriefings that he did not expect all students to gain the same skills and capabilities, and diversity in abilities

was one of the things that was celebrated in his classroom. In our observations, Taylor used a variety of scaffolding techniques to support individual and collective student learning of writing processes, skills, and strategies, though not as many as his grade-level colleague Valerie, with whom he collaborated on his writing instruction. In particular, he was never observed to use transactional supports such as repeating and summarizing information and contextualizing writing activities through discussion of their relevance and connections with other lessons. Thus, there is congruence between what Taylor reported to us in interviews and on the TWPS and what we observed—a few minor adaptations for struggling writers. Making more extensive adaptations may have conflicted with his belief that students develop along their own growth trajectories and consequently should not be expected to reach the same levels of performance as other students. Alternatively, though Taylor displayed relatively strong personal teaching efficacy (pretest-posttest average of 4.6), he was not as confident in his ability to overcome obstacles in children's writing performance for which he had little control based on his average of 3.8 on general teaching efficacy, which declined from the beginning to the end of the school year. Relatively weak general teaching efficacy may be related to fewer instructional adaptations because the teacher is less confident that such changes will impact the intrinsic limitations struggling writers possess.

When asked to share his philosophy of classroom management, Taylor stated that his focus was on students making a choice between self-managed behavior and teacher-managed behavior. His attitude toward students who acted out was, "Why are you giving me all the power? You are giving me all your power; you are telling me to manage your behavior. I don't want your power; you keep it!" Students who give up their power are subject to "whatever the consequences are. That's giving the power up. That's giving the power of your own life to someone else because of your behavior." Observed consequences in Taylor's room usually involved punitive measures (five out of the six elements we coded), but positive consequences were also used for desirable behavior. Some negative consequences included time-outs and loss of privileges. Even when more positive techniques were used, such as the awarding of tokens to small groups of students for positive behaviors, response cost was employed. Although Taylor emphasized the terminology of self-management, there was little evidence that students were given tools for improving their self-management skills. Likewise, our observations revealed that Taylor did not use a variety of methods to monitor students' understanding, such as reiterating information, asking questions, or encouraging students to rephrase what was stated or report on their writing progress, all student engagement tactics that would be expected to decrease the need for punitive consequences for misbehavior. When students are engaged, they have little reason for disruptive actions.

Valerie. Like her grade-level colleague Taylor, Valerie is a veteran teacher with long-term involvement with writing instruction professional development offered through the nonprofit community agency. She endorsed a polytheoretic view of writing instruction with a strong belief in the importance of explicit instruction (pretest-posttest average of 5.8 on the TWOS) and a slightly less entrenched belief that incidental teaching is important (average of 4.5). She did not believe that correct mechanics was an appropriate area to emphasize with her second and third graders (average of 2.9). In our interviews and debriefings, these beliefs were evident in Valerie's comments. For instance, she stated that she felt basic writing skills and text

structure needed to be explicitly taught, regardless of the content of the writing. She also indicated that children needed to feel free to express themselves through their writing, to have a strong voice, and to believe what they have to say is meaningful, and that this is largely accomplished by convincing students that they should not be overly concerned about writing mechanics, spelling in particular, for which she provides assistance. And like Taylor, the observation data revealed no use of revising or editing checklists or classroom postings of writing rules and traits but daily encouragement of invented spelling. Her beliefs regarding the value of incidental and informal teaching came across in our interviews. According to Valerie, her instructional goals and daily minilessons were driven by her ongoing assessment in class. She took baseline data in the fall and used students' weekly writing homework (paragraph-length texts) and daily work on larger writing projects to determine where to go next. For her, daily monitoring was critical to her teaching: "I have a curriculum in mind, where I want to go throughout the course of the year, what I want to do . . . but very specific things come from their work the day before. They write every week as part of their homework, and so I look at those over the week to come up with some plans for minilessons based on what I see."

Valerie believed her own writing experiences helped her deliver quality writing instruction; she kept a journal, wrote letters, and recorded thoughts about writing craft (e.g., phrasing, effective leads) as she read literature. In fact, she maintained relatively high levels of self-reported personal teaching efficacy (pretest-posttest average of 4.9) throughout the school year on the TSW. Valerie saw her role as a facilitator in the process of bridging each student's personal writing style with the use of conventional written forms. She credited her instruction as "empowering" students because they "have a chance to get their thoughts down on paper" and "have a chance to be able to share that to be validated, to be honored, and supported" in the daily sharing process. We observed Valerie using a wide variety of instructional practices that reflect a strong sense of personal teaching efficacy and ample experience as a writer and a teacher of writing; she used 69% of the student engagement and 67% of the instructional tactics we coded and never used punitive consequences to manage student behavior during our observations.

When working with struggling writers, Valerie (*a*) served as a scribe, (*b*) audio-recorded students' writing to let them listen to their work, and (*c*) used a word processor to help a particular student overcome his writing difficulties. Additionally, she sometimes had children draw what they wanted to write about and then helped them with the writing. She had some children write using repetitive patterns, which provided more structure and predictability. She often spent more individual conferencing time with students who struggled and approached them first to make sure they were able to complete a writing task. She also gave them additional time to complete writing assignments and probed them more. Some of these adaptations were reflected in her self-reported alterations for struggling writers on the TWPS. Valerie possessed relatively positive general teaching efficacy (average of 4.2), which could be expected to yield the deployment of a greater array of instructional adaptations for weak writers. However, Valerie did show a drop on this dimension of teaching efficacy over the school year.

Valerie offered little insight into her views on classroom management during interviews and debriefings except to say that she believed ample support for students as they undertook writing assignments was critical to avoiding behavioral problems

(and as seen in the data in Table 4, she did indeed use a large array of tactics to engage and instruct her students). In fact, we observed very few instances of student misbehavior in Valerie's class during the year, which may have necessitated fewer management tactics and consequently less reflection on her part regarding this aspect of teaching writing.

Pamela. Though Pamela was a novice third-grade teacher, she held similar theoretical orientations toward writing instruction as her peers: a strong belief in the importance of explicitness (pretest-posttest average of 5.0), an equally strong belief in the importance of naturalistic teaching practices (average of 5.3), and a belief that correctness is far less important to successful writing for her students (average of 2.6). Accordingly, Pamela stated that she saw writing as a naturally acquired process, and she thought that all students could learn to become proficient writers. She said she preferred that students learn to freely express themselves without concerns regarding correctness because she was not convinced that mastery of writing mechanics was necessary to exhibit good writing, though she expressed that teaching the conventions of standard written English was important. And just like Taylor and Valerie, she valued the use of invented spelling by students, but we did observe her employing editing worksheets to address areas like punctuation with which most students had difficulty and occasionally providing minilessons devoted to grammar. Thus, Pamela exhibited a somewhat conflicted view of the role of correct conventions in written English; this is not surprising given her inexperience, which also likely is why she displayed nearly perfect adherence (89% of coded elements) to the prescribed writing workshop curriculum.

Pamela said she held high expectations but at the same time created a nonthreatening learning environment for her students by "taking the pressure off" and modifying assignments and instruction for students to work at the "just right" level. Our observations confirmed that her class was a warm, inviting place with much interaction between student pairs and a fairly diverse repertoire of tactics to support student growth in writing through workshop management, student engagement, and instructional tactics. Interestingly, one aspect of workshop management that probably would have benefited her third graders but was absent when we observed was an emphasis on explicit self-management tactics such as setting goals, planning in advance, and self-monitoring and evaluating performance. Pamela's relatively high levels of personal and general teaching efficacy (pretest-posttest means of 5.2 and 4.8, respectively), largely maintained throughout the school year, were related to the diversity of practices in which we observed her engage. Nevertheless, she herself reported little differentiated instruction based on students' writing ability, except in the case of using computers to support writing, and a decline in the frequency with which she used virtually all instructional practices. Once again, Pamela's thoughts, beliefs, and practices appear to be disjointed. Finally, Pamela offered little insight into her own classroom and workshop management, except to say that she believed letting students work with partners and having many opportunities to share their work and have it celebrated helped her writing instruction succeed. Pamela, as well as Taylor and Janet, utilized punitive consequences.

Betty. Betty, who had less than a decade of teaching experience and one year of prior involvement with the writing workshop professional development efforts at the school, espoused a fairly balanced view of writing instruction practices and, like our other teachers, downplayed the role of correct writing mechanics (pretest-posttest

means of 6.0, 4.4, and 3.1 for explicit instruction, incidental teaching, and correctness, respectively, on the TWOS). The prominence of explicit instruction in her theoretical orientation is clearly communicated when she stated, “at this age, most of them feel comfortable with writing, and we just start targeting certain things like conventions and voice.” Although Betty was not necessarily sanguine about demanding perfection in students’ papers, her status as a second-language learner when she went to school solidly influenced her views about mechanics: “I had a lot of trouble writing, especially being a second-language learner, so I think teaching the skills in the lower grades in addition to whole language is really important.” Her average rating of 3.1 for the importance of correctness in writing is the highest among our group of teachers. Accordingly, she displayed the use of many material supports to foster the development of conventional usage such as checklists, posted rules, and dictionaries, and she did not give invented spelling the same degree of credence as her peers who also taught third grade.

Betty said that about a third of her students were struggling writers; she increased the length and frequency of conferences with those students, and she tried to focus on one area of concern for each student until the student had demonstrated mastery of that area. She often had struggling writers pair up with a buddy in order to provide extra support, but they were always expected to complete all assignments given to the class. These efforts were corroborated for the most part by our observations, though we saw neither self- nor peer-management tactics employed or many opportunities for student autonomy. When asked about her instructional weaknesses, Betty said that she would like to find more ways to help those students who had problems with writing, especially those who had trouble generating ideas for their papers. In fact, she reported very few adaptations for students based on their writing abilities save for encouraging more invented spelling among less proficient writers, a practice not necessarily consistent with a focus on explicit instruction.

Betty told us, “How much they read themselves at home, and how much their family reads to them, is also a factor. I understand because I come from that background.” Her belief that background plays a key role in students’ writing achievement was associated with relatively low levels of general teaching efficacy (pretest-posttest average of 3.5 on the TESW); in her view, these are obstacles that are quite difficult for a teacher to negotiate. Her personal teaching efficacy (average of 4.9), on the other hand, was consistent with most of the teachers in our study. Thus, we did observe her use a fairly diverse mix of tactics in her classroom. As was the case with Valerie, Betty’s students displayed low levels of undesirable behavior during our observations, perhaps due to the wide array of instructional tactics (in our opinion, her class was perhaps the best organized among the six), and so she said little regarding classroom management.

Janet. Janet, a veteran teacher with more than a dozen years of experience but no prior involvement with sustained professional development for writing instruction, displayed a polytheoretic view of writing instruction practices and, like her colleagues, downplayed the role of correctness (pretest-posttest means of 5.4, 4.5, and 1.9 for explicit instruction, incidental teaching, and correctness, respectively, on the TWOS). Nevertheless, Janet remarked about the need for students to develop good handwriting and spelling skills, given that difficulty with these skills could detract from their ability to express their ideas. Janet said she emphasized both editing and revision during her writing conferences, helping her students to correct spelling

errors and rephrase sentences for improved clarity. She noted that most of her students were struggling with transcription skills that could hinder their writing development and that her approach to writing instruction was to work on specific skills while offering authentic experiences for her students. Despite Janet's claims regarding her instruction in the conventions of English, our observational data aligned better with her theoretical stance; we did not see her use revising or editing checklists or classroom postings of writing rules and traits, material supports that would be expected to reinforce correct usage. Moreover, though Janet self-reported a strong preference for explicit instruction, among the six teachers in our study she displayed the fewest different instructional tactics (46% of coded items) and provided the least variety of opportunities for student collaboration as part of the writing workshop curriculum, according to our observations. Even based on her self-reported practices, she taught composing strategies least frequently of all the teachers and retaught skills and strategies on average only once a month. Altogether, these findings suggest that Janet's focus on the mechanics of writing was likely quite limited, and what she knew to be important in effective writing instruction was not well represented in her teaching actions.

In interviews, Janet emphasized motivation in her approach to supporting students who were reluctant or poor writers. She wanted to help them avoid the frustration that often leads them to "shut down." She stated that she assisted one student in particular by helping him spell words, encouraging him to persevere, and individualizing his homework assignments so that he would continue to want to write. Janet did not report making any adaptations for struggling writers on the TWPS, though this may have been because she held a narrow view of poor writers (e.g., only students with special education needs), and she only had two such students in her class. Generally speaking, our observations revealed that Janet gave her students many opportunities to choose how they wanted to complete an assignment and welcomed their opinions, providing a sense of autonomy and ownership. Likewise, she used the greatest variety of workshop management tactics (50% of those coded) among our teachers. Yet she tended to use punitive consequences (four of six we coded) and did not explicitly teach her fourth graders to self-regulate the writing process and their writing feelings, thoughts, and behaviors.

Although Janet expressed a desire to improve the quality of her writing program, she was unsure of specific strategies to accomplish this goal. Moreover, Janet explained to us that she was still learning how to be a better teacher of writing, and that she viewed writing as a difficult area for her: "I have my own fear, and my fears come from my own experience in writing growing up. So, I have my own fears or reluctance about teaching writing. It's an area of growth. I see writing differently now than I did a few years ago." These trepidations were evident in her reported self-efficacy, specifically her personal teaching efficacy, as she displayed the lowest scores in this domain (pretest-posttest average of 4.0) among our teachers on the TESW. Her general teaching efficacy, on the other hand, was higher (average of 4.9).

Kerri. Kerri, a veteran teacher without prior experience with the ongoing professional development in writing instruction at the school (it was her first year at Cascadia Elementary), was much like all the other teachers in her theoretical orientations (pretest-posttest average of 6.0, 4.4, and 2.9 for explicit instruction, incidental teaching, and correctness, respectively, on the TWOS). However, her notable decline in attributing importance to incidental writing instruction and her increased endorse-

ment of correctness by the end of the school year may have been associated with her dissatisfaction with two aspects of the professional development program: limited attention to writing conventions (most students who failed the district writing assessment in her class did so because of poor use of conventions) and the lack of flexibility to address genres that may be relevant for older students studying complex subject matter.

For students who struggled with writing, besides providing individualized instruction in writing skills and craft elements, Kerri also had them compose drafts with a word processor. She felt it took time to diagnose exactly why a student was struggling. She felt it was important to maintain high but appropriate expectations for such students and to encourage their attempts and provide them with writing activities that capitalized on their interests. These observed efforts and commentaries were consistent with her self-reported instructional practices; she clearly differentiated her instruction for students with varied writing abilities, most notably by the end of the school year. As might be expected, Kerri displayed a strong sense of both personal teaching efficacy (pretest-posttest average of 4.7 on the TESW) and general teaching efficacy (average of 4.1). Accordingly, she used a variety of management, engagement, and instructional tactics, though we did not observe her employing revising or editing checklists or posted rules and such. The absence of these material supports may have been related to her close adherence to the prescribed curriculum (she used 85% of the coded elements in Table 4) as a new teacher in the school and in the professional development program. Her views about writing and writing instruction were, according to her, transformed by her experiences with writing a doctoral dissertation. She claimed to be a much less reluctant writer because of her recent educational experiences. Thus, her strong efficacy beliefs as reported on the TESW may be tied to her views of herself as a writer, much like Valerie's appear to be.

Kerri felt that writing, in the context of a trusting relationship, was a way of getting to know her students and their personal needs better, and she relished the occasional surprises that came from students in their writing. Kerri believed that, in order for students to flourish as writers, they must (*a*) possess an identity as a writer, (*b*) trust that they have something interesting to say through their writing, (*c*) have opportunities to share and celebrate their writing with a variety of audiences, (*d*) be clear about the expectations for a writing assignment, and (*e*) be creative and flexible in using their writing skills. These beliefs were associated with (*a*) workshop management that did not employ punitive consequences but rather promoted a high degree of self- and peer management, (*b*) ample opportunity for meaningful student engagement in the writing workshop, and (*c*) varied instructional supports (excluding, however, many transactional supports).

Discussion

Past research has found that teachers who possess a strong sense of teaching competence and who believe in a balanced approach to literacy instruction tend to engage in desirable teaching behaviors (e.g., Wharton-McDonald et al., 1998), and that these positive behaviors are associated with higher levels of literacy achievement in students (e.g., McCutchen et al., 2002; Troia et al., 2009). This study examined six elementary teachers' epistemologies and beliefs about writing instruction and their influence on the teachers' writing workshop instructional practices via mixed meth-

ods. These methods enabled us to derive a more fine-tuned theoretical model of the interplay between teacher epistemologies, beliefs, and actions than has been attained in prior research, particularly because we adopted a broader view of the elements of effective writing instruction than has typically been used. Our model is graphically displayed in Figure 1. Additionally, our study adds to the small corpus of investigations that have focused exclusively on writing instruction and teachers of writing. We discuss the findings that led to this model, organized by our primary research questions.

What Specific Teaching Practices Do Teachers Employ, and Is There Much Variability Across Teachers?

As anticipated, because of the teachers' immersion in high-quality professional development aimed at improving the teaching and learning of writing, the essential components of writing workshop (e.g., daily workshop time, student-centered assignments, teacher modeling and feedback, and guiding routines) were evident in each classroom we observed and were discussed in similar ways by our teachers, except for the area of vocabulary: not every teacher emphasized learning the vocabulary associated with writing instruction so that students and teachers shared a common "language" about writing. The teachers differed more with respect to how they managed the workshop environment (range of 33% to 50% of the coded positive management elements), with two teachers also using several punitive consequences such as time-outs and publicly displayed warnings. Additionally, most of the non-verbal (e.g., using a timer) and verbal (e.g., describing a desired behavior) means of managing student behavior, which are perhaps the easiest to implement in a classroom, were employed by only a couple of teachers. Perhaps most disconcerting was our finding that only half the teachers capitalized on self- or peer management (e.g., goal setting, progress monitoring, and self-evaluation) to run a smooth writing workshop. Writing theory and research suggest that the regulation of thoughts, feelings, actions, and the writing process is pivotal to writing success (e.g., Troia & Graham, 2003).

The teachers varied even more (range of 38% to 88% of the coded elements) along the dimension of student engagement tactics. Specifically, the provision of choice in assignments, work space, and partners, and the use of what we called checking—having students give a verbal report on their writing progress is a key example—were not consistently used across teachers. Using methods to promote student engagement would be expected to downplay the need for punitive consequences and perhaps other management techniques. We found partial support for this assumption in that Taylor, who used the smallest number of engagement tactics, instituted the most different types of punitive consequences. Yet Janet used a number of punitive consequences, but also employed the most varied array of engagement tactics among our group of teachers. In Janet's case, her discomfort with writing instruction may have yielded a scattershot approach to how she dealt with students. As for instructional tactics, there was indeed a wide range (46% to 67% of coded elements) in what actions our group of teachers took to teach writing. In particular, we noted little use of material supports including checklists for revising and editing, dictionaries, scoring rubrics, or visual displays of writing rules, traits, and task instructions, as well as low levels of transacting with students in ways to support learning via repetition of

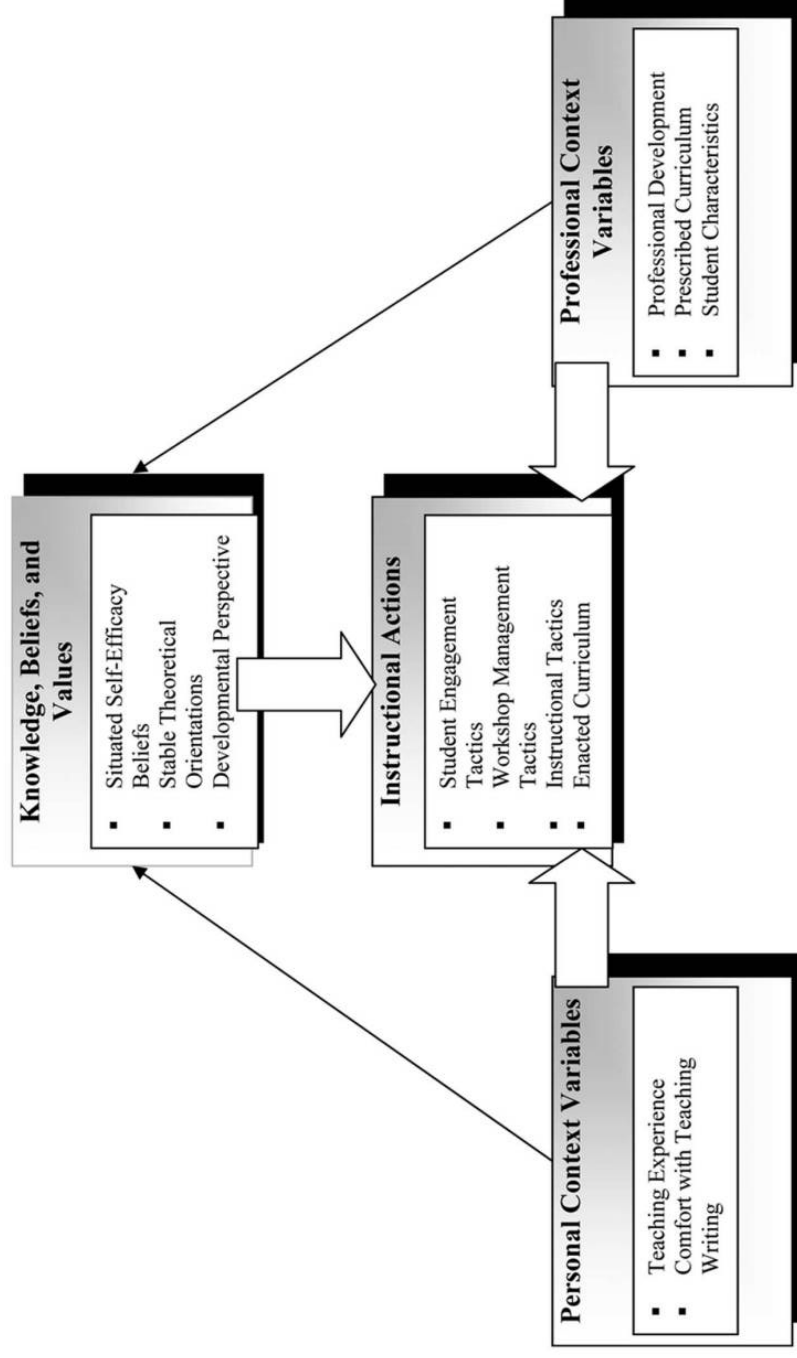


Figure 1. Theoretical model of relationships between teacher epistemologies, beliefs, and instruction in writing.

information and placing emphasis on the importance of writing activities (through summarizing, debriefing, and validating). The lack of material supports appears to be largely due to teachers' de-emphasis of the importance of correct writing conventions in students' writing that we observed on the TWOS.

According to the teachers' self-reported instructional practices, by the end of the school year they less frequently taught writing skills or engaged in reteaching. These changes likely reflect developmental considerations; teachers might expect students to need these supports less often as the children have mastered skills, strategies, and routines throughout the year. As a group, the teachers reported making modest adaptations to their instruction based on students' writing abilities. Some of the adaptations they discussed during our interviews and debriefings included increased time for conferring to permit more individualized instruction, scribing for students who dictated their drafts, using a word processor to type text, and permitting students additional time to complete assignments. These adaptations were observed only in some teachers' classes on some occasions, so we believe that the self-report survey data accurately reflect limited use of adaptations for struggling writers, which has been reported in prior research (Graham et al., 2003).

What Are Teachers' Knowledge and Beliefs Regarding Writing Instruction and Do They Change?

As was found in Cutler and Graham's (2008) study, our group of elementary teachers held a polytheoretic orientation toward writing instruction, positively endorsing both explicit instruction and, to a lesser extent, incidental teaching methods, while devaluing the importance of correctness in students' writing. This balanced view of writing instruction was held by teachers regardless of their experience with teaching in general or teaching writing in particular. Additionally, they did not display notable changes in their theoretical orientations, except for slightly higher expectations for correctness at the end of the school year, which again probably reflects a reasonable developmental expectation. Likewise, our teachers perceived themselves to be competent teachers of writing and, to a somewhat lesser degree, capable of overcoming factors that impede learning. Four of the six teachers, however, reported less confidence in their capacity to overcome learning obstacles at the end of the year. Although we have no definitive explanation for this decline based on the data we collected, we hypothesize that these teachers, all of whom taught second and/or third grade, were faced with poor writers who made little progress during the school year despite their teachers' efforts.

Do Teachers' Epistemologies and Beliefs Influence Their Teaching Practices?

We found that teachers with higher levels of perceived teaching competence generally enacted more key elements across the dimensions of workshop management, student engagement, and instructional tactics, while teachers with lower levels of personal teaching efficacy used a smaller repertoire of elements across these same dimensions. Likewise, teachers who possessed a relatively strong sense of general teaching efficacy tended to use more instructional adaptations for struggling writers, while those who felt little control over these factors did not display such a rich and varied use of adaptations. Cumulative experience as a classroom teacher and comfort

with teaching writing appeared to moderate teachers' self-reported efficacy beliefs and their pedagogical practices. This was most evident with Pamela and Janet, whose epistemologies, beliefs, and teaching activities appeared to be at odds with each other: Pamela was both a novice teacher and unfamiliar with writing workshop instruction, whereas Janet was a veteran teacher who expressed great trepidation regarding teaching writing. Although not a key aspect of the professional development program in which our teachers participated, other professional development efforts, such as those undertaken by affiliates of the National Writing Project, view teachers' personal writing attitudes and behaviors as essential to effective professional development and student success (e.g., Pritchard & Honeycutt, 2006).

We also found that teachers who eschewed perfection in students' writing based on their theoretical orientation regarding correctness did not use instructional elements that would be expected to lead to mastery of writing mechanics, while those who did place more emphasis on the conventions of English did use such elements (though not in Kerri's case, because she had to take on the mantle of a new staff member and avoid "making waves" for the professional development staff). This view may be associated with the struggles a teacher faces herself with using correct conventions. We view this as problematic from an instructional standpoint. Writing mechanics have been shown to be quite important for overall writing success and quite amenable to instruction (e.g., Troia, 2006; Troia & Graham, 2003), so the downplay of correct usage and subsequent limited instruction in these skills does not align well with evidence-based practices.

Finally, our teachers who placed great emphasis on explicit writing skills instruction tended to use a less diverse array of tactics for classroom management. This particular finding was mirrored in teachers' comments during the interviews, as most commented that strengthening their students' writing confidence and motivation through explicit instruction helped alleviate inappropriate behavior. Thus, the degree to which teachers use effective management tactics may be related to how well they circumvent the need for active behavior management through strong writing instruction as well as student engagement.

Study Limitations

One important limitation of our study design is that our multiple observations in each classroom captured whether or not particular teaching behaviors occurred, not the frequency of those behaviors; it is entirely possible that a particular behavior or group of behaviors occurred relatively infrequently or virtually always. The TWPS, administered at the beginning and end of the school year, did assess the frequency with which teachers reported using various instructional practices, but this instrument was developed by other scholars and did not include many of the practices we identified *in vivo*. Thus, the issue of instructional consistency could not be fully addressed in our study.

Another important limitation is our use of surveys with Likert scales to assess teachers' epistemological beliefs. This data collection method has several drawbacks: (1) respondents are often forced to agree or disagree with statements without an opportunity to qualify their responses, (2) individuals can respond without fully reading or comprehending an item, and (3) surveys tend to be susceptible to social desirability effects. Though we did repeatedly interview each teacher, we did not ask

them specific questions regarding their self-efficacy beliefs and theoretical orientations toward writing instruction, so they were not provided with an opportunity to elaborate on their responses and we did not check their assumptions about the items to which they were asked to respond.

A final limitation is the small number of teachers we studied within a unique context, which renders our findings tentative and limits their generalizability. However, a small sample afforded a more detailed examination of teachers' beliefs and practices that would have been more difficult to achieve with a large sample.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Our findings by and large replicate those of a small handful of studies in terms of the kinds of epistemologies and beliefs teachers hold regarding writing instruction (e.g., Graham et al., 2001, 2002). Similarly, we too found great variation in teachers' writing instruction practices (e.g., Cutler & Graham, 2008; Lipson et al., 2000) and links between their beliefs and practices (e.g., Georgiou et al., 2002; Graham et al., 2002; Poulou & Norwich, 2000; Rose & Medway, 1981). We have extended and refined the limited research on the connections between teacher beliefs and their instructional practices in the domain of writing. This study demonstrates that a narrow view of writing instruction—one primarily defined by the features of the writing workshop approach, the processes associated with the cognitive model of writing, and the study of varied text genres—is not sufficient for understanding the complexity of writing instruction and the relationships between teacher characteristics and their instruction. In the context of rather standardized high-quality professional development efforts, such a narrow view does not yield much variability; one must examine other important aspects of high-quality instruction like management, engagement, and specific instructional maneuvers to see how teachers differ and how their knowledge and beliefs relate to their teaching actions. It is our hope that our data will serve as a helpful starting point for conducting more comprehensive research on classroom writing instruction and examining links between instruction and other variables, such as teaching efficacy. We think it especially important for scholars to examine how teaching experience, comfort with teaching writing, student characteristics, and teaching context interact with teachers' epistemologies, beliefs, and practices, as we saw these as moderators of the relationships we observed (see also Guskey, 1988; Hoy & Woolfolk, 1993). Further study is necessary to validate and refine the theoretical model we have derived from our findings.

Notes

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1. A previous factor analysis of this instrument indicated that four items loaded at .40 or greater on the explicit instruction factor, which accounted for 16% of the variance in scale scores among a national sample of primary grade teachers. The internal consistency reliability for this factor was .64. Four items loaded at .40 or greater on the incidental methods factor, which accounted for 12% of the variance in primary grade teachers' scale scores. The internal consistency reliability for this factor was .60. The remaining five items loaded at .40 or greater on the expectations-for-

correctness factor, which accounted for 22% of the variance in scale scores. The internal consistency reliability for this factor was .70. It also was found that relatively low correlations (ranging from .01 to .24) existed between the factors, and that teachers' beliefs about writing instruction were related to their reported classroom instructional practices in a predictable and reliable way.

2. A previous factor analysis of this instrument indicated that 10 items loaded at .40 or greater on the personal teaching efficacy factor, which accounted for 26% of the variance in scale scores among a national sample of primary grade teachers. The internal consistency reliability for this factor was .84. The remaining six items loaded at .40 or greater on the general teaching efficacy factor, which accounted for 13% of the variance in scale scores. The internal consistency reliability for this factor was .69. It also was found that there was a relatively low correlation of .20 between the factors, and that teacher efficacy predicted teachers' reported classroom instructional practices.

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